

AMENDMENT

LISTING OF CLAIMS

This Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A method of converting cellulose in cellulose sausage casings to lactic acid comprising the step of:

treating unwashed cellulose sausage casings comprising nitrate or nitrite with cellulase and a lactic acid producing microorganism at essentially the same time under suitable conditions and for a period of time sufficient to allow conversion of at least a portion of the cellulose to lactic acid. A method of converting cellulose in cellulose sausage casings to lactic acid comprising the step of:

treating spent unwashed cellulose sausage casings comprising nitrate or nitrite with cellulase and a lactic acid producing microorganism at essentially the same time under suitable conditions and for a period of time sufficient to allow conversion of at least a portion of the cellulose to lactic acid.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the microorganism is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus* species.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the microorganism is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus brevis*, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *lactis*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *bulgaricus*, *Lactobacillus fermentum*, *Lactobacillus lactis*, *Lactobacillus pentosus*, *Lactobacillus plantarum*, and *Lactobacillus thermophilus*.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the cellulase is selected from the group consisting of a partially purified cellulase and cellulase contained in or obtained from a solid substrate cultivation of a cellulolytic fungus.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the cellulase contained in or obtained from a solid substrate cultivation of a cellulolytic fungus is selected from the group consisting of *Trichoderma reesei*, *Rhizopus oryzae*, and *Aspergillus niger*.

6-13. (Cancelled)